

A FAMINE TO BE FEARED

AMOS 8:11 • TV-003B

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By

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A Famine To Be Feared

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Amos 8:11

“Behold, the days co me, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

I invite your attention today to a passage of Scripture which is found in the book of **Amos**. It's **Amos chapter 8 verse 11**.

The Scripture says; *“Behold, the days come saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Words of God* We're in that day. We're in a spiritual famine. Now, the reason that I believe that we're in a spiritual famine today; we're not in a revival and we're not in an awakening, we're in a famine. And one clear evidence that we are in a spiritual famine, that men today do not know themselves, and they do not know the living God, is the abundance of religious talk.

Now I want you to think with me. I don't want you to get angry with me. I want you to think a few moments. Everybody has something to say on the subject of religion.

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There's no hesitancy on the part of anyone to express an opinion on every subject in the Bible.

Everybody today is a religious teacher; everybody is his own preacher. There aren't many learners and there aren't many disciples. Men talk religion on the streets. They argue about the Bible down in the plants, in the mills, in the homes, in the factories and in the stores. Every person is an expert on God. Every person is an expert on the Bible. Every person is an expert on religion.

Now a man won't talk too much about automobile mechanics unless he has studied it a little bit. And a man won't talk too much about electricity unless he's taken a little bit of time to study the subject.

And a man won't talk about medicine or science unless he's taken the time to study a little while. But everybody in this world is an authority on the Bible. Every mouth has something to say, some opinion to express about religion, about God, about salvation and about heaven. And it wasn't that way among God's true people.

Now, I want to show you something. I want you to take your Bible. If you don't follow with me write down these Scriptures and go back and read them later. Will you do that?

First of all I'm going to read from the book of **Ezra 9:4-5**.

Now listen to this; this is a true man of God speaking. Ezra is a true servant of the Lord and this is what he says; *"And at the evening sacrifice I arose from my affliction and having rent my mantle I fell on my knees and I spread out my hands before the Lord and I cried: O my God; I am ashamed and I blush to lift up my face to thee my God for my sins are many and have increased over my head."*

Have you heard any language like that lately? Have you heard anybody cry that way lately? Now this is the mark of revival when a man begins to understand his guilt, his sins, God's holiness and God's greatness and he says with this prophet of old; *"I fell on my knees and have spread out my hands to God and I cried O my God; I'm ashamed and I blush to lift up my face to thee O my God, for my sins have increased over my head."*

Listen to Job. We know that Job was a man of God because the Lord himself said *"There's none like my servant Job, a righteous man."* But listen to what Job says; he said in chapter **40:4**; and **42:5-6**; *"I've heard of thee Lord by the hearing of the ear but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I hate myself. I abhor myself. Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer thee? I'll lay my hand upon my mouth."*

That's not our language. That's not the language of this day. Ask a man any question about religion and he'll pop off. He'll give you an answer. If he doesn't know one he'll make one up. But Job says, *"I abhor myself. I put my hand on my mouth. I've got nothing to say."*

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When he saw his sins, when he saw his guilt, when he saw God's holiness and greatness and majesty it struck him dumb. And then in **Psalm 39**; listen to David. We know something about David's relationship with God. God said himself; *"I found David my servant to be a man after my own heart."*

David didn't run around a church throwing songbooks and hollering "Whoop-pee;" David said this; *"I was silent. I opened not my mouth because God did it. I was silent. I opened not my mouth."*

Listen to the wise man Solomon. You know, we come to church now days; we call this revival, we call this religion today. We come to church and everybody's got something to say. It's not hard to find somebody to put on the program because everybody wants to be on the program. Everybody wants to testify, pray, sing, teach Sunday school or have something to say.

Listen to Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 5:2**: *"Be not rash with thy mouth. Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in the heavens and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words be few."* Why this is revival? This is when men really know God. Isaiah said, *"When I saw the Lord I cried: I'm a man of unclean lips."*

Now, if we felt that we were men of unclean lips we wouldn't want to take them into the pulpit so readily would we? We wouldn't want to get upon the floor of the church and have something to say every time somebody gave us an opportunity if we realized we were, *"People of unclean lips."*

Listen to **Ezekiel 16**. God says; *"I will establish my covenant with thee and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. When you find this out you'll know that I am the Lord and that you may remember and be confounded, confused, and never open your mouth again because of your shame."*

That's the Scripture, *"I will establish my covenant with you and you'll find out when I establish my covenant with you who I am. I'm the Lord God."*

And you'll find out who you are. You'll find out your shame and your guilt and your sin. And you'll find out my holiness and my power and you'll be confounded and you'll never open your mouth again because of your shame.

When men of old saw their sins like Isaiah and like Daniel; he said, *"When I saw the Lord I saw the Lord. My beauty melted into corruption."*

John on the Isle of Patmos; *"I saw the Lord. I heard His voice as the sound of many waters and I fell at His feet as a dead man."*

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We talk about the Lord breaking in on our meetings and we jump up on our feet like dancers, you know, not dead men, but dancers, and carry on a pack of foolishness and say, “The Spirit lead us to do it.”

But these men were awed in God’s presence, filled with fear and reverence. When these people saw their sins and when they saw the grace of God and the glory of God, it sealed their mouths.

Somebody said, “Philosophers have measured mountains. They have fathomed the depths of seas and states and kings. They’ve walked with a staff to heaven and traced fountains but they’re two vast, spacious things, the which to measure, we ought to embrace, and yet few understand them, my sin and God’s grace.”

“Two vast, spacious things the which to measure, we should embrace, and yet, there are few who understand them, my sin and God’s grace.”

There was one who measured them, man’s sin and God’s grace, man’s sin and God’s wrath against man’s sin. He measured them in the Garden of Gethsemane. And when He faced the awful load of man’s guilt and sin and depravity, when He faced the wrath of God against that sin he cried out *“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”*

And the blood came out of the pores in His skin. Yes, Christ measured the depths of my guilt in the Garden of Gethsemane and it nearly killed Him before He got to the cross. The Lord Jesus measured God’s wrath against our flesh in the Garden of Gethsemane and cried, *“O God if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done.”*

In the book of **Romans 3:19**; listen to this, Paul said, *“We know that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; (that’s me and that’s you, we’re under the law) that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.”*

Somebody asked me the other day if I thought that we were really moving in to what one great evangelist recently said was a, “Fourth great-world awakening?”

I said, “No, not at all, not until every mouth is stopped, not until the world becomes guilty before God, not until we judge ourselves, not until we realize our sins, not until we realize who God is and who Christ is, and how we can be reconciled to Him through the righteousness of His Son. And I know this has got to happen. Every mouth has got to be stopped; every mouth has got to be stopped.”

Now, when God opens a sinner’s ears to hear His law God closes that sinner’s mouth. Paul said, *“When the law came I died.”* Paul had a lot to say before God sent His law in the hands of the Holy Spirit and revealed unto him his sin.

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But he said, *“When the law came in the hands of the Holy Ghost; I died. My mouth was stopped.”* When God opens a sinner’s eyes to see his guilt, his own personal guilt, and to see God’s glory, when He opens his eyes he shuts his mouth.

The people with their mouths open always having something to say are those who’ve got their eyes shut and their ears plugged up.

Let me give you four or five things here. Now you listen to me carefully today. When God almighty reveals to a man that man’s sin and depravity and reveals God’s glory and God’s grace that man stops talking about his own morality and his own good works. God stops his mouth about his works and his morality.

Somebody said as long as a natural man breathes he brags. But you know who’s doing the bragging? It was the Pharisee’s in the days of Christ. Do you know who was doing the bragging about their deeds and about their morality and about their works, the old Pharisee’s whom Christ called *“hypocrites.”*

One of them said, *“Lord; I thank thee that I’m not like other men. I’m not an extortioner, I’m not an adulterer. I’m not an unjust man. I thank thee Lord that I’m not like this Publican for I fast twice in the week and I tithe and I give alms of all that I possess.”* Christ said, *“He went home lost.”*

The man who brags and boasts of his works and good deeds and morality are men like the rich, young, ruler. When the Lord said, *“Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill; he said all of these have I kept from my youth up.”*

The people who brag and boast of their morality are those who stand at the judgment in that great day and look the Master in the face and say, *“We preached in your name and we cast out devils in your name and we did many wonderful works.”*

The people who boast of their morality are those who are going to hear Christ say, *“You’re workers of iniquity; I never knew you.”*

But when God’s law comes, God’s holy, eternal, immutable, immaculate, perfect law, which demands perfection not only outwardly but inwardly, not only in action but in attitude, not only in deeds but in motive, when that law comes and shines its searchlight upon these old rotten filthy hearts of ours; do you know what happens? Our mouths are stopped.

And like the apostle Paul we say, “I was alive once without the law but when the law came, when the law was truly revealed, I died.” Paul in **Philippians 3** talks about: *“I was born of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, concerning the law, blameless, exceeding many my equals. But all of these I count but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him.”*

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You take your Christian upbringing and your family altars and devotions and your Sunday school classes you've taught and your tithes you've given and the souls you won to Jesus; you take all of your good works and write them down and write, "*dung*" on them, if you can do that your eyes have been opened and your mouth's been stopped.

And you can say, "*All of these things I count but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him.*" My friends; the Word of God says, "*All our righteousness's are filthy rags. We all are as an unclean thing. We do fade as the leaf.*"

We are sin. We not only do sin, we are sin. Have you ever seen this? You can't breathe without sin. You can't talk without sin. You can't even walk without sin. You can't pray without sin.

When you confess your sins it's filled with sin. Even your repentance needs to be repented of. Even your tears need to be bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Your very mind is enmity against God. "*In the flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The Lord God looked down from heaven to see if there was any that did understand and any that did desire God. And He found, they're altogether turned aside. There is none that doeth good, no not one.*"

You say, "That's a terrible indictment preacher to bring against this human race." I didn't bring it; God did, God did. God says, "*There's none good, no not one. And what the law saith it saith to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.*"

And we're not going to see revival in our churches or in our cities or in our states or in our nation or in this world till some mouths are stopped and people quit talking about what they're doing for God and go to seeking something to be done for us by the hand of our God.

Secondly: When God reveals our sins and His glory it shuts our mouths about free agency.

Everywhere I go I hear people talk about man's free will and man's free agency, "Man's a free, moral, agent." Well, a man's not free and he's not moral and he's not an agent. It's like Grape Nut Flakes; it's not grapes and it's not nuts; we are not free, not moral and not an agency.

You know, the man who doesn't see the prison bars; he can talk about his freedom. The man whom the doctor has not yet told his legs are paralyzed for life can talk about how far he's going to run when he gets out of the hospital.

And the man who has not seen his sin and his guilt and his bondage and the fetters that bind him hand and foot in bondage to sin and bondage to the broken law can talk about his free, moral, agency.

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Just like Nebuchadnezzar may boast of his power to build mighty Babylon till he found out that God built it. He said, “When I regained my senses I found out that God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth.”

The Pharisee’s may boast of their decent from Abraham. “*Abraham is our father,*” they said. God said, “*The devil is your father.*”

Pilate may boast of his power to crucify or release Jesus Christ till the Lord set the record straight. Pilate said, “*Well I have the power to crucify you or let you go.*” Christ said, “*You don’t have any power at all over me except it were given you from above.*”

Don’t boast about your power; “*All power is of God.*” Your power to believe right now; God gave you, my power to raise this hand; let me see you raise your hand without God. My power to make a step is from God. “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” Boast about your ability. Jeremiah said; “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Can the leper change his spots? Neither can you do good that are custom to doing evil.*” It’s not in your power.

Christ said in **John 6:44**; “*No man can come to me except my Father which sent me draw Him.* The Father must draw him. Like the leper in **Matthew 8** who said; “*Lord, if you will, you could make me whole, if you will.*” Peter sinking beneath the waves cried, “*Lord; save me or I perish.*”

When God opens a sinner’s eyes to see his slavery; we’re slaves to sin, we’re servants of sin. Paul said, “*The things that I would do I do them not. The things I would not do I do.*” We’re servants of sin and Christ is going to have to set us free. The great Emancipator has got to set the servant free.

Thirdly: And then when God reveals a sinner, to a sinner his sins, he shuts his mouth about God’s divine sovereignty.

You know, Paul wrote in **Romans 9:20**; “*O man who art thou that repliest against God? Can the thing formed say to him that formed it, why did you make me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay to make of the some lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?*”

Who is the king? Who is the sovereign? It’s not man; it’s God. Rebellion against God’s sovereignty was the first sin of man in the Garden of Eden. Satan said, “Eve, if you eat of that tree you’ll be like God. You can throw off God’s scepter and rule. You can throw off God; you’ll be God yourself. You’ll be your own boss.” That was Satan’s sin back before man was created. He said, “*I will be like God. I will exalt my throne above the throne of God.*”

That’s what we’re trying to do. We’re trying to be gods ourselves. We’re trying to make God our servant, our valet, instead of us being His servants in His hands.

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It was as a king that Herod sought to kill Jesus Christ, not of the preacher; there were preachers running around all over that place. It wasn't as of a divine healer that Herod hated Him; it was he. He said, "Find me the one who was born king of the Jews." He wanted to kill Him.

It was as the king that these people rejected Him of His day. They said, "*We'll not have this man reign over us.*" It was as the king that cried for His death; they said to Pilate, *We have no king but Caesar.*"

It was as the King that those soldiers mocked Him down in the soldier's hall. They put that crown of thorns on His head and that filthy robe on His back and the scepter in His hand and bowed down and worshipped Him; "*Hail, King of the Jews.*"

It was as a king that He was crucified and Pilate wrote over His head, "*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.*" He wrote it in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Men hate His sovereignty. They hate His kingship.

But I'm telling you this, when God opens a sinner's eyes to see his inability, his total corruption, his total inability to do anything for himself; the Scripture says; "*Without hope, without help, without God, without Christ,*" at his wit's end, and he cries unto the Lord.

Psalm 107, "*In his trouble, he cried*" To whom? The Lord, the King, the sovereign, the one who could do something about it.

Paul said, "*I know whom I have believed and I'm persuaded He's able*" to do something for me. He is able. Salvation is of the Lord. It's of the Lord in its planning. Back before the world began He planned salvation.

It is of the Lord in its execution. "*It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. God sent His Son into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them born under the law.*"

God sent Him. God sent Him to the cross. God raised Him from the dead. God exalted Him to His right hand. That's all God's doings.

Salvation is of the Lord in its application; God called you. God quickened you. God awakened you. God revealed His Son in you. You weren't out seeking the Shepherd; you were the lost sheep; He was seeking you. He said, "*You didn't choose me I chose you.*" We didn't love Him; He loved us. "*We love Him because He first loved us.*"

Salvation is of the Lord in its application; He's the sovereign in creation, in providence, and salvation. Salvation is of the Lord in its sustaining power. "*We're kept by the power of God.*"

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You don't keep yourself saved. "I'm holding out!" No you're not; He's holding you in His hand. "*They're in my hand,*" Christ said. "*No man's able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*" That's where they are.

And salvation is of the Lord in its ultimate perfection. Salvation is of the Lord and is written across the throne of God, in indelible, brilliant, eternal lights; salvation is of the Lord.

Now last of all: When God opens a sinner's eyes to see his sin, his guilt, to see God's power and sovereignty, who God is and what I am; when God opens a sinner's ears to hear the Gospel, not in Word only, but in power in the Holy Spirit; he shuts his mouth.

He quits bragging on himself and starts crying for mercy. He shuts his mouth about free agency. He quits talking about his freedom and goes talking about his bondage; "God do something for me, I'm dying, I'm going to hell, break my shackles; set me free."

He quits complaining about God's sovereignty and he goes to worshipping the Lord. That's the only place a man will worship is at the throne of a sovereign God. Men will bargain with an equal. They'll set terms with an equal.

But when they come before a sovereign they just shut their mouths and say; "Do with me what you will. Remember me Lord when you come into your kingdom."

And then it shuts his mouth to all murmuring and complaining. They came to Job and they said, "Job; all of your sheep and your oxen, horses, camels; everything's dead. Job, we hate to inform you but all of your children are dead too and your friends have all left you."

And his wife standing over there said, "Well old man; why don't you curse God and die?" And Job said; "*Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked I'll leave this earth. God gave and God hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*"

When a man sees the God of the Bible, the God of the universe, the living God it shuts his mouth and he quits complaining and murmuring. He says, "*It's the Lord; let Him do what He will, it's the Lord; let Him do what He will!*"